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ABSTRACT

Sentence-by-sentence analysis of factual or propositional cohesion in the first 29 lines of a Swedish children's story finds several sources of coherence that contribute to its cohesion. First, the text receives much coherence from its description of a single event, a situation where happenings are normal and expected. Second, a rather primitive and simple discourse universe is gradually expanded into a more elaborate one by introducing new individuals related to the original ones, by building on existing referents, and by combining sentences to illustrate the social relations between individuals and the attitude of these individuals toward school. This technique enables the reader to draw inferences about the story. The factual cohesion considered here is distinct from other elements such as cohesion markers, which are not markers but only symptoms of factual, situational, and iconic cohesion. (MSE)

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AN ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL COHESION IN A PASSAGE FROM MARIA GRIPE'S "HUGO OCH JOSEFIN"

by

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1. What is textual cohesion?

The study of textual cohesion has recently attracted much interest among linguists. The goal of this study has roughly been a method of determining what constitutes a well-formed, coherent text. Particular interest has been directed towards questions such as the following ones: How can a coherent text be distinguished from an incoherent one? What kind of elements can serve as connective links between the sentences in a well-formed text? Can cohesion be measured by counting connective links? What connective links have to be present for a text to be perceived as natural and coherent, and what links can be present in an incoherent text?

It is my impression that the concept of connective link is a fruitful one, but that it should not be too narrowly defined. A connective link is not always a relation between well-defined parts of the sentences in the text, e.g. two identical words. The link can also be a relation between entire sentences, or rather, between propositions. We also have to distinguish between a symptom and a cause of cohesion. It appears to me that an identity relation between two noun phrases, hyponymy, antonymy etc., generally are merely symptoms of cohesion, and that the real causes are the connective links between the propositions in the text. Such connective links

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give a text f a c t u a l c o h e s i o n , or c o h e r e n c e .

When several sentences are intuitively felt to have the same topic, they normally can be said to build up a common discourse universe. A particular sentence, for example, elaborates the picture of the world given in the preceding sentences; this is a typical example of factual cohesion. A particular individual in the discourse universe already specified is pointed out and some new information is given about him, e.g. his relation to some new individual, who is thereby introduced into the discourse universe. The elaboration of the old discourse universe thus involves a repetition of the mention of a previously mentioned individual.

But the mere repetition of a noun phrase is not enough to give a text factual cohesion. It is also required that the propositions of the text are comparable in some respect, or that they together form an argument or a chain of events which normally occur together. It is quite common that several propositions in a text are examples of the same general rule or enable the reader to draw the same inference. This is generally referred to as 'reading between the lines'. If two sentences form a seemingly incoherent text, but enable the reader to draw a common inference, the text will aquire more coherence than expected.

2. An analysis of a text

This preliminary discussion of the causes of textual cohesion is rather vague, and I shall therefore present a more detailed discussion of the factual cohesion in a specific text. The object of the analysis is the first 29 sentences of a children's book in Swedish, "Hugo och Josefin" by Maria Gripe. The entire text is given in an appendix. Here I give the English translation alone, sentence by sentence, followed by rather detailed comments on each sentence. In spite of its simple discourse universe and the low age of its intended public, the text makes use of quite complicated cohesive devices.

Title: Hugo and Josefin

Two individuals are introduced: one presumably male and the other female. This guess is motivated by our knowledge of the language and of the relevant world. Items called Hugo are normally male living creatures, and items called Josefin female, although this is not absolutely necessary. Since we know that the text is taken from a children's book, we may also guess that Hugo is a boy and Josefin a girl, since the main characters in

children's books often are children, and since the title normally refers to the main characters. However, this second guess is much more uncertain than the first one. This illustrates how we establish the identity of the individuals in the discourse universe, assigning to them various properties with varying likelihood, varying degrees of e x p e c t a n c y . Only explicitly mentioned properties are certain; other properties are merely expectable, or predictable, and can be corrected as the interpretation of the text proceeds.

(1) They are on their way to the roll-call at school, Mummy and Josefin.

A spatio-temporal scene is presupposed, although it is not further specified, and in this scene two individuals are said to be moving towards a destination. One of them, Josefin, has been mentioned before, and it is therefore natural to relate the other individual to her; Mummy is then interpreted as Josefin's mother. Another possible interpretation would be the narrator's mother. Some readers will be aware of this, thus forming a l t e r n a t i v e e x p e c t a n c i e s , alternative pictures of the world of the text. Other readers will probably overlook this possibility, since the narrator is not explicitly mentioned in the text. The interpretation 'Josefin's mother' also gets further support in the sentence; mothers often follow their children to school when they start first grade. This sentence then enables the reader to form a host of expectancies: it is mid-August (i.e. the beginning of the Scandinavian school year), Josefin is about 7 years old, going to her first day at school. Later on, we shall see that these expectancies are confirmed, and this confirmation serves as a cohesive device.

The text starts in medias res. The scene is not described, and the destination of the movement described is referred to in Swedish by a noun phrase with a definite article, which should indicate that it is previously known. Similarly the individuals are referred to by they, which has to be specified by a dislocated coordination Mummy and Josefin, to be understandable at all. The start in medias res is perhaps made possible by the fact that the previous experience of the reader provides him with a ready frame into which he can place the content of the sentence: a girl on her way to her first day at school. This ready frame also provides the many expectancies mentioned in the last paragraph.

(2) It is a beautiful day, the cicadas are playing in the grass, and the wind is making a rustling sound.

This sentence is automatically understood as describing the scene presupposed in the first sentence, on the basis of what could be formulated as the p r i n c i p l e o f t h e c o n t i n u e d s c e n e : when possible, a sentence will be understood as specifying the same scene and topical referent as the preceding sentence. The consequence of the principle is a cohesive link between the sentences. It seems that the reader will always try to find cohesive links between the sentences of a text, and the continued-scene principle is one way of supplying cohesion, when no explicit cohesive link is given.

Although the three clauses in sentence (2) do not share any common noun phrase, there are quite strong cohesive links between them. If it is a beautiful day in the summer, cicadas are quite likely to play and the wind is very likely to make a rustling sound. The clauses are not only compatible with each other (i.e. it is possible for the clauses to simultaneously express true propositions), it is also likely that they are true simultaneously; there is an expectancy relation between them, which strengthens the cohesion of the passage. Simultaneously, a cohesive link to the preceding sentence is created, since this kind of weather is quite likely to occur in mid-August, when school starts. Observe that the reference of an expectancy relation need not always be two 'overt' sentences, but that it also can hold between an overt sentence and an expected one, i.e. a sentence which is not explicitly mentioned, only implied. Nevertheless, this expectancy relation will serve to increase the cohesion of the passage.

The expectancies are often extremely subtle and uncertain. In sentence (2), the fact that cicadas are mentioned might suggest that Josefin is walking, since otherwise she would not have heard the cicadas. This presupposes that the text is in some sense written from Josefin's point of view, that the speaker's empathy lies with Josefin. This is not an unreasonable assumption, since Josefin's mother seems to be mentioned as Mummy, i.e. is identified by her relation to Josefin, not by an independent description. A consistent point of view also functions as a cohesive device.

(3) Josefin wears a bow in her hair and on her feet new shoes, red -- quite shining.

Here the established discourse universe is further elaborated. A known individual, Josefin, is being described, and this creates a cohesive link to the title and to sentence (1). But the whole sentence also expresses a predictable fact. Girls going to their first day at school often wear this type of clothes and this strengthens the cohesive link to sentence (1).

Furthermore, the bow and the shoes are parallel instances of fine clothing, which in turn creates a cohesive link within the sentence.

(4) There is a light wind-- now and then she must make sure that the bow is as it should be.

The beginning of this sentence repeats the end of sentence (2), or rather, mentions one of its presuppositions: if there is a sound made by the wind, there must be a wind. This is an obvious cohesive link. The function of this repetition seems to be to remind the reader of a fact which serves as a point of connection for the rest of the sentence. The relation between the beginning and the end of the sentence is one of expectancy: if there is a wind, it is likely to ruffle Josefin's hair and bow, and if that happens, Josefin is likely to see to it that the bow is kept tidy. This presupposes, however, that Josefin is a nice girl who wants to be tidy. This information can therefore be read between the lines. A reader who wants to maximize the cohesion of the text will automatically supply this information.

(5) There is dust on the road and she must all the time see that her shoes do not get dust on them.

Here, the road can be regarded as a given discourse referent. However, this does not guarantee that the sentence coheres with its context. More important is the expectancy relation between the first clause of the sentence and the rest. The mechanism is here exactly parallel to the one in sentence (5), and this iconic resemblance also serves as a cohesive link. But I think that the main function of the iconic relationship is to emphasize the information given in the related sentences. Much more important for the cohesion is the fact that sentences (4) and (5) have a common implication: Josefin is a good girl. The sentences have a common purpose.

(6) As they approach the school, other mothers and other children are coming from all directions.

It is of course an expected fact that Mummy and Josefin will approach the school, given that they are on their way to the roll-call there. Therefore, sentence (1) links to sentence (6). Given our knowledge of the world, it is also to be expected that other mothers and other children will be coming there. A further similarity between the new individuals on the one hand and Josefin and her mother on the other is that they all come in pairs; however, this is not essential for the cohesion of the passage. What is more

important is that they are likely to occur together in the same situation.

(7) All of them look a little solemn.

This sentence adds new information on given discourse referents. Observe, however, that the seriousness of the mothers and the children is not unexpected, given our knowledge about similar situations.

(8) All of them have the same destination.

This sentence is almost a truism, given the preceding sentences. If children and their mothers are converging on a day when there is a roll-call at school, it is most likely that they are on their way to the roll-call. Strictly speaking, it need not be so, but the reader's tendency to maximize the cohesion in a text almost inevitably leads him to this conclusion. The sentence is therefore totally expectable, though not predictable in the sense that no other sentence could have taken its place, which could have happened perfectly well.

The function of sentence (8) seems to be to emphasize the importance of the destination, and to suggest that the individuals involved are thinking about this destination rather intensely, which might be the reason for their solemn appearance. This therefore constitutes a causal cohesive link between sentences (8) and (7).

(9) The school.

Gives further emphasis to the destination.

(10) Almost everyone says "Good morning" to Mummy.

This sentences gives new information about the given discourse referents, although it is not totally unexpectable. It also implies something which is not explicitly stated; the sensitive interpreter might observe that it is only the other people who say "Good morning", while Josefin's mother is passive. This might suggest that Josefin's mother is of higher social rank than the other people, since in this culture a person of lower rank should greet a person of higher rank, and this expectation will be confirmed later on. It is harder to guess why some of the people did not greet Josefin's mother (n.b. A l m o s t everyone...).

(11) They recognize her because she is married to Daddy Father, who is the parson of the church.

This sentence connects with the preceding one -- Mummy's high social rank is confirmed. Furthermore, this social position makes it expectable

that she will be recognized, and this expectancy further strengthens the cohesion of the text. In the Swedish text Pappa Far (Daddy Father) is spelled with capitals, unlike mamma (Mummy). This can be taken to express either admiration or a solemn relationship between Josefin and her father.

(12) Then Josefin curtseys and the strange mothers push their children, so that they too curtsey and bow to Mummy.

This sentence describes a rather expectable ceremony, but some interesting observations can be made. Josefin drops a curtsey voluntarily, while the other children are almost forced to do so. However, Josefin's behaviour is quite expected, since we know from sentences (3) and (4) that Josefin is a good girl. The new implication is that the other children are not as good as Josefin.

(13) Everyone is very polite today.

This sentence is in a way a summary of sentences (10) and (12). However, it seems somewhat ironic, since not all the people had greeted them and since the children are polite only upon request. It also suggests that they are not equally polite at other times, which further stresses the fact that the day of the roll-call is a solemn one -- cf. the description of Josefin's clothes.

(14) Josefin has seen some of the children before, but does not know anybody.

Rather unexpected information is here given about the relation between Josefin and the other children. We can observe a gulf between Josefin and the other children, which was in fact already suggested in sentence (12). The good girl, Josefin, does not know the bad children.

(15) Many of them have teased her, and called her old-fashioned, but now there is nothing like that to be heard.

Again, it is expectable that the bad children might have teased the good girl. There is, then, a weak cohesive link to sentences (12) and (14). Similarly, it is quite expectable that the solemn situation and the presence of their mothers will prevent the children from teasing her now. This links the sentence to sentences (7), (12), (13), etc.

(16) They all walk quietly beside their mothers.

This sentence is parallel to the last clause of the preceding sentence and is connected to the same sentences as that sentence. It is quite to be

expected that their mothers, and the solemn situation -- perhaps the thought of a gloomy future at school -- make the children keep quiet.

(17) The mothers talk to each other, but the children do not say a word.

The latter part of the sentence repeats the preceding one, but here the opposition between grown-ups and children is made clearer.

(18) Although they know each other and play every day in the village, they behave like total strangers now.

Here the opposition between Josefin and the other children is indirectly confirmed. The other children are said to know each other, but in sentence (14) we learnt that Josefin does not know the other children. The good girl Josefin, and the well-behaved grown-ups, are thereby almost put into the same category, since they are both contrasted with the children. The latter part of the sentence further emphasizes their solemn appearance.

(19) They just stare at each other.

The sentence repeats the theme of the passage -- the silence of the children, due to the gravity of the situation.

(20) There goes Edvin Pettersson with his sturdy mother.

A new paragraph is introduced, and one of the pairs introduced in sentence (6) is picked out.

(21) Usually he is the horror of the villagers -- but the pride of the children.

This sentence contains unexpected information on a given individual, but the opposition between the grown-ups and the children which was suggested in sentences (12) and (17) is further emphasized.

(22) A little savage that nobody is safe from.

The sentence elaborates the first part of sentence (21). Here the point of view seems to have shifted from Josefin to the villagers. This fact further strengthens the affinity between Josefin and grown-ups which has been hinted at before. We can also observe that the pejorative word vilde, 'savage', coheres with the irony in sentence (13).

(23) A rumpled forelock that can be seen everywhere.

This description fits the picture of a rascal which was sketched in the two preceding sentences.

(24) Today he is standing there somewhat shyly, slicked down with water, and pale.

This sentence is parallel to sentences (7) and (16-19). The only difference is that here just one individual, not the whole group, is said to be shy and quiet. The sentence emphasizes the contrast between the day of the roll-call and other days. This is a common purpose for many sentences in the passage.

(25) Dejectedly he glares at the other small ragamuffins in the gang, also newly scrubbed.

The sentence is parallel to the preceding one, but also re-introduces the other children into the focus of attention. We can also observe the pejorative words fröna, 'ragamuffins', and nyskurade, 'newly scrubbed', which form a cohesive link to the word vilde, 'savage', in sentence (22).

(26) Nobody says a word.

The sentence repeats sentence (17).

(27) Everything is full of solemnity on this day.

The sentence almost repeats sentence (7), and re-emphasizes the gravity of the situation.

(28) The high school-gates are wide open.

A fact like this is quite to be expected on a day when school starts. (More informative is the presupposition that the school had gates at all!) It is justified to mention this information because this focusses the attention of the reader on the destination of the movement mentioned in sentences (1) and (8).

(29) They walk through them.

The destination is reached.

3. Conclusion

Let us now summarize our observations. The text receives much of its coherence from the fact that it describes a single event (with some small excursions): a group of children are walking to their first day at school, accompanied by their mothers. Given this situational background, almost all the facts of the story are to be e x p e c t e d -- i.e. in such a

situation it is quite normal for such things to happen. This is a substantial source for the coherence of the text. It should be observed that the expectancy relation does not always hold between facts explicitly mentioned in the text. What can be read between the lines is often very important for the cohesion of the text. Two sentences can for instance have the same expectations, which itself will serve as a cohesive link between them. In fact, the reader seems to have a tendency to look for such implicit cohesive ties in order to maximize the coherence of the text. The need for coherence leads him to read between the lines.

But the expectancy of the sentences of a text is of course not the only way of giving coherence to the text, perhaps not even a necessary ingredient. We can also observe in our example how a rather primitive and simple discourse universe is gradually expanded into a more elaborate one. New individuals related to the old ones are introduced, and more information on these individuals is given. A discourse referent already given normally serves as a point of connection for the new information. This also gives the text coherence, especially if the new information is expectable against the background of the old discourse universe. But the expansions are seldom arbitrary and do not go in any direction. The text should also make a principled choice between the expected expansions in order to be coherent. In our example, many of the sentences collaborate to give a picture of the social relations between the individuals on the scene and of their attitude to the school. The sentences of the text often enable the reader to draw some inference -- e.g. sentence (5) makes him think that Josefin is a good girl. Such an inference is often essential to the coherence of the text, and can then be called a p u r p o s e . A common purpose for several sentences in the text serves as a very strong cohesive device.

There are several types of cohesion. In this paper, I have concentrated on one type, factual cohesion or coherence. It can be defined as a relation between the propositions of a text -- the propositions form together a story or an argument which is consistent with our expectations, formed on the basis of our previous experience. It should not be confused with the presence of c o h e s i o n m a r k e r s , such as the occurrence of repetition, antonyms, hyponyms, conjunctional adverbs, pronouns etc. These cohesion markers are neither a necessary, nor a sufficient condition for factual cohesion. They are just s y m p t o m s of it. The cohesion markers are partly an automatic consequence of the factual cohesion, partly a deliberate result of the speaker's wish to bring out

clearly the coherence of the text and give it emphasis.

We can also speak of s i t u a t i o n a l c o h e s i o n, which arises when a set of sentences are uttered in the same speech act. Here the factors of the speech situation are kept constant: speaker, time, place, probably also listener, medium and code. The unity of the speech situation gives a certain impression of cohesion, which can be marked by special cohesion markers, such as the occurrence of words with the same stylistic flavour, sentences with roughly the same complexity, a uniform voice level, etc.

A special type of cohesion marker is i c o n i c c o h e s i o n, i.e. similarity between text units on the level of expression. It is manifested in rhyme and meter, the repetition of sentence patterns or other syntactic units. Such iconic cohesion does not give coherence to a text, but it can serve to emphasize a similarity on the level of contents. In fact, all factual cohesion can probably be reduced to similarity between propositions on the level of contents. The similarity can take the form of having a common purpose, being expected to be true in the same situation, being elaborations of the same discourse universe.

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APPENDIX

The beginning of Hugo och Josefin by Maria Gripe.

(1) De är på väg till uppropet i skolan, mamma och Josefin.
(2) Det är en vacker dag, syrsorna spelar i gräset och vinden susar.
(3) Josefin har rosett i håret och på fötterna nya skor, röda -- alldeles blanka. (4) Det blåser litet -- då och då måste hon känna efter att rosetten sitter som den ska.
(5) Det dammar på vägen och hon måste ideligen se till skorna, så de inte får damm på sig.
(6) När de närmar sig skolan, kommer från alla håll andra mammor och andra barn. (7) Alla ser litet högtidliga ut. (8) Alla har samma mål. (9) Skolan.
(10) Nästan alla hälsar på mamma. (11) De känner igen henne för att hon är gift med Pappa Far, som är präst i kyrkan. (12) Då niger Josefin, och de främmande mammorna puffar på sina barn, så de också niger och bockar för mamma. (13) Alla är mycket artiga idag.
(14) Josefin har sett en del av barnen förut, men känner ingen. (15) Många har retat henne, kallat henne gammalmodig, men nu hörs inte något sådant. (16) Alla går tysta bredvid sina mammor. (17) Mammorna pratar med varandra, men barnen säger inte ett ord. (18) Fast de känner varann och leker var dag i byn, beter de sig alldeles som främlingar nu. (19) De bara stirrar på varann.
(20) Där går Edvin Pettersson med sin stadiga mamma. (21) I vanliga fall är han bybornas skräck -- men bybarnens stolthet. (22) En liten vilde som ingen går säker för. (23) En rufsig kalufs som syns överallt. (24) Idag står han där litet blyg, vattenkammad och blek. (25) Förstämd bligar han på alla de andra små fröna i gänget, lika nyskurade de. (26) Ingen säger ett knäpp.
(27) Allt är högtidlighet denna dag.
(28) De höga skolgrindarna står vidöppna. (29) Man går genom dem. ---